

WASHINGTON—Today, U.S. Representative Mike Quigley (IL-05) reminded his colleagues on the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee of the active role that Congress has played in limiting the effectiveness of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF). Quigley made his remarks after a hearing to investigate the death of a border patrol officer following Operation Fast and Furious, an ATF gun tracing effort in the southwest United States.

“We must rigorously scrutinize what went wrong in Operation Fast and Furious and work to ensure a tragedy like this never happens again,” said Quigley. **“Unfortunately, tragedies don’t occur in a vacuum. Congress bears the responsibility for lack of leadership at ATF because Congress has continually blocked the appointment of a director. Until Congress affords the ATF adequate tools to do its job, this pattern of violence will continue, gun trafficking will thrive, and lives will be lost.”**

For the past four and a half years the Senate has blocked the appointment of an ATF director, and during the last eight years, the ATF’s budget grew at a much slower pace than those of all other federal law enforcement agencies. The ATF had budget shortfalls of \$70 million in FY 2007 and \$37 million FY 2009.

Additionally, there is limited recourse for the ATF to prevent the flow of weapons from sellers in the United States to Mexico. Purchasing stockpiles of weapons, buying multiple AK-47s, or selling those guns after purchase is not cause for intervention from law enforcement under U.S. law. In September 2010, a report from Mayors Against Illegal Guns revealed that 90 percent of the firearms recovered and traced in drug cartel-related crimes in Mexico originated in the United States. The report also noted that southwest border states were the source for 75 percent of these firearms.

As part of Operation Fast and Furious, an attempt to connect straw purchasers to Mexican drug cartels, the ATF allowed the sale of weapons to suspected straw purchasers along the southwest border. One of the guns was used to kill Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry.

Congressman Quigley recently [introduced an amendment to the Patriot Act to prevent suspected terrorists from purchasing guns](#), but it was voted down in the Judiciary Committee. He also [introduced legislation to stem the flow of illegal weapons](#)

by making guns easier to trace. He has spoken out repeatedly for

[closing the gun show loophole](#)

and

[questioned Attorney General Eric Holder about reinstating the assault weapons ban](#)

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